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ABSTRACT

The discourse of writing center conferences was studied to determine whether it is potentially different from classroom discourse. The question was what happens to communication between teacher and student when the setting and roles are somewhat altered. The writing center setting was chosen because the focus is on face-to-face conversation that is not hierarchical. A particular moment in the interaction between one student and one writing consultant at the center was chosen for analysis using Mehan's model for analyzing the social organization of classrooms. Several examples of initiation, response, and evaluation (IRE) were found. Ways that agendas are negotiated and modified in discourse in a writing center conference were also noted. It was found that the conference differed from classroom discourse in some ways, and that when the student and consultant agendas came into conflict, the consultant used questions to focus the student's attention on problems with the student's agenda. (LB)

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An examination of consultant-student discourse in a writing center conference[1]

Felicia Lincoln Porter

This paper looks at the discourse of writing center conferences as potentially different from classroom discourse. It also considers how the agendas of both participants are negotiated considering their various responsibilities and the structure of the writing center conference.

Introduction

"The teacher's first strategy is to impose her definition of the situation by talking most of the time." (Delamont, 1983: 115). In the classroom, teachers talk at least 60% of the time and as much as 90% of the time. They use discourse to control and manage the class. They use many techniques: explaining, correcting, evaluating, summarizing, questioning, to name a few. Of the amount of time that teachers talk, much of it is metacommunication (Stubbs, 1983). And according to Delamont, it is not just American or English-speaking teachers, but teachers around the world. In typical classroom settings, teachers do most of the talking.

But what happens to communication between teacher and student when setting and roles are somewhat altered, for example, in a writing center? To explore this question, I will look at a conference between a college writing center consultant and a freshman composition student in the writing center at Drexel University.

Most colleges today provide some type of writing center as a place for students to find "help" for their writing problems, whether those problems are in a writing class (composition) or part of the student's interdisciplinary writing projects.

Dr. Carole Huber, Director of the Drexel Writing Center, says the focus in the Writing Center is on face-to-face conversation that is not hierarchical. The student is expected to maintain responsibility for her[2] paper. Also, the consultant is not the

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student's own instructor. Students may come in on their own to the center and the sessions are not officially anchored to credit. The student is not responsible to the consultant and, in fact, may never see the consultant again. While there may be rapport established as there might be in counseling, there is no maintenance of that rapport, and ostensibly nothing at stake for either participant (no grade or evaluation).

Explicit in the handbook given to consultants and in the brochures distributed to students is the instruction that the ownership of the student writings remains with the student. Students are responsible for decisions about whether to revise their work or not.

Ulichny and Watson-Gegeo studied writing conferences between sixth graders and their teachers as reflections of the power relationships of society. They describe students as the experts[3] on the content of their own papers and wondered if that would cause a shift in the perceived roles in the writing conference. Their study, however, showed very little difference in the discourse in writing conferences than that of regular classroom discourse. The teacher still talked; the student listened and responded. They assert that teachers teach defensively and chose methods of control because they are efficient and create "as little student resistance as possible" (1989: 325).

But what happens if the student-teacher age difference is negligible and evaluation is not an issue? In doctor-patient interviews, where doctor-patient age varies, Mishler found that doctors controlled their interview situation through a cycle of request/question followed by assessment/ evaluation of patient responses, which ended one cycle of discourse. The doctor then asks another question. The doctor also initiates each new topic, usually through questions (1984:69). However, it may be that in this setting the patient forfeits the right to control because of lack of topic knowledge and the often desperate need of the patient. It may be that in writing centers, the student relinquishes control for similar reasons.

Most of the literature that I reviewed dealt with the issue of student-teacher conferences rather than writing center consultants. Student-teacher conferences fall into the category of gatekeeping encounters (Erickson, 1975). In these encounters, according to Erickson, the gatekeeper (in this situation, the teacher) can often play two roles. On the one hand, she is the counselor and friend; on the other hand she is the "gatekeeper" for the institution, authorized to allow some students through and to keep some out.

A "double bind can be created if the consultant is also the student's instructor. The student, on the one hand, is being told to take responsibility for her own work, knowing all the while that the paper will be evaluated by the teacher. This can create

an equal, but opposite dilemma for the instructor. She is rightly concerned that the student learn through trial and error (discovery and hypothesis-testing), and yet, she feels pulled to comment on issues in the writing that she knows that she must address in her evaluation.

According to Huber, the writing center consultant should be non-evaluative, exploring what the writer believes to be writing problems and needs. The Drexel Writing Center has as its objectives the elimination of that double bind, the elimination of the gatekeeping encounter, and the creation of an environment where the student may truly question and experiment in a judgment-free environment. The Writing Center is a place where a student can bring a paper and participate in an open dialogue without fear of being censored or judged. Consultants may help with diagnosis of problems in writing, but more often are expected to explore the processes (thinking and writing) of the student. Consultants should not be authority figures but "advisers, coaches or helpers" (Harris 1986: 22).

An overriding philosophy of the Center is that responsibility for writing remain where "it belongs: with the student" (Appendix). The manual states that consultants should offer immediate response to best serve writers, have students to write as a way to learn to write and empower students with strategies that can assist their prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing (Appendix). To insure that evaluation is not an issue, Drexel Writing Center policy states "No consultant is permitted to work with a student who is currently enrolled in one of his classes." (Appendix).

Hypothesis Questions

Two questions were addressed by the analysis. 1) Does classroom discourse differ from Writing Center discourse? If so, how? 2) How are agendas[4] negotiated and modified in discourse in a writing center conference?

Description of Setting

The Writing Center is in the basement of the Humanities and Communications building on the Drexel Campus. The room is small (perhaps 25' by 15') with two large, round tables, a desk, and some bookcases in it. Student and consultant sit at a round table with books between them. There is often a conference being conducted at the other table only inches away. While that could make one self-conscious, it appeared to me (as an observer) that after a few minutes the lull of conversation actually contributed to a feeling of anonymity. Often there was conversation at the desk and in

the hall. It seemed to create a comfortable atmosphere, as if conversations were being held in a lounge or living room with other guests as well.

Participants

This particular consultant, Carol, is 30 years old. She has taught three years in this department and one year somewhere else, in addition to her graduate student teaching. She is a graduate student at Emory University, doing a dissertation on Renaissance literary prose and poetry. Besides teaching in the writing series in the Humanities and Communications Department at Drexel University, she has designed the core course and syllabus for the freshman writing series and is Assistant Director of the Writing Center. She is familiar, not only with writing problems and processes in a generic sense, but also with what Drexel faculty expectations and student needs may be. She does not have the student in class, although this is not her first conference with this student. (In fact, she has seen her perhaps six or eight times before).

Jan is a freshman part-time student in her early twenties. She works full time at Drexel in a computer center and for that receives tuition remission. She was taking two courses at the time of this session. She was obviously motivated and apparently had a positive attitude towards the Drexel Writing Center.

This was near the end of the summer term. The essay Jan is working on is a fulfillment of the requirements for a course. This particular visit was the third of three to the Writing Center for this paper alone. She had seen this consultant once and another consultant on the previous day. In one of her previous trips to the Drexel Writing Center, she had broken down and cried. The consultants had sent her home to pizza and then to bed. By the session that was taped, she was behind schedule and feeling terribly pressured.[5] She had done many revisions of the paper (possibly six), and had a long, full revision at this session. She still felt she did not know what to focus on or how to make her points. She had seen the course instructor who had not "liked the paper at all."

Terms

It may be helpful to define some terms that will be used in this paper. I call the participant who brings the paper to the center, the student. I prefer this term to client, because she comes as a result of being a part of a class in the institution served by the center. Also, client sometimes carries a connotation of money for services rendered and the center is a service provided by the University. No money exchanges hands (at

least in the context of the Drexel Writing Center). The Drexel Writing Center representative, I call a consultant for two reasons: 1) it is the term the Drexel Writing Center uses, and, 2) it distinguishes between trained peer representatives who are called tutors. The consultants are paid employees of the University, usually adjunct writing faculty who also teach in the freshman writing series at Drexel.

Procedures for Data Collection

Data was collected on a video cassette, using a video camera on a tripod. Videotaping was done by an uninvolved third party for the purposes of research. The conference concerning this paper lasted approximately 30 minutes. I based my methodology for examining the videotape on Erickson's work, particularly his "Gatekeeping and the Melting Pot" (1975). The following procedure was used to select fifteen minutes for study.

Schultz (1991) has said that flurries of "activity always indicate a topic change." Therefore, I first looked at the tape without sound on fastforward, noting where there was activity. Then, I played it slowly looking for activity. Next, I watched the tape backwards. After that, I applied sound and watched it several times, noting any exchanges that I thought were interesting. There was one sequence on the tape where Carol asks Jan a question. I had been following along and I was unprepared for the answer. I noted the place.

Following these sessions, I audiotaped playback sessions with the two participants and with the consultant who had previously seen Jan about this particular paper and its revisions. In a playback session with Carol, the consultant in the videotaped session, I noted all parts that seemed interesting to her. She commented on the same sequence that had interested me. She was extremely helpful and came to me several times after the initial session with points she had reconsidered or that had suddenly occurred to her. The purpose of one of her return visits was to again discuss and reevaluate her ideas about the moment of "interest" to us both.

I also had a session with Jan, the student. She was very interested in talking to me about the paper. However, she was less interested in discussing the videotape than she was in simply recounting the frustrations she had felt with writing in general and with that paper in particular.

Based on my perceptions and the comments of the participants, I selected the "interesting" moment discussed above as the core of the segment to be transcribed. I then transcribed the 7-8 minutes before and after the "moment" for analysis.

Analysis

How does classroom discourse differ from the language of the writing center conference?

Using Mehan's model (1979) for analyzing the social organization of classrooms, I found that there were several examples of initiation, response, evaluation (IRE). I found 11 of these IRE sequences, although in at least 9 of them, the sequences could be interpreted as IRERE with the student renegotiating the answer in light of the evaluation given by the consultant.

The amount of response the student made to the elicitations or initiations of the consultant in these sequences was also different from what Mehan reported (1979). Student responses tended to be long (4 or 5 T-units, often with dependent clauses). This could be due to the age of the participants in the college writing center as opposed to the young students Mehan examined, or a result of the more sophisticated questions and issues being addressed by the student. For example:

> Jan: They have take control of all the money in the land; they pick their mayors and they do a lot of stuff like that.
> Carol: The women do?
> Jan: The women do. The women do all of this. But yet the mayors are the men and the high paying positions are men. So here they have a lot of different responsibilities and a lot of power but yet they really don't. I mean you know like the article... it's written...

Even when Carol asked for clarification, Jan offered more than just the necessary repetition or rewording essential for clarifying the point.

The consultant had more total T-units than the student (102:61, 63% to 37%), less than is usually found in classrooms, but still more teacher talk than student talk. The greater input by the consultant may also be a reflection of the expectations of student and consultant. After all, the student has come seeking input. Of the 29 turns taken by each, Carol had 9 clear initiations while Jan had 5. The 15 remaining turns were a combination of responses and evaluations. This is more like "normal" conversations than most classroom discourse.

The consultant asked more questions: 21 in 15 minutes of talk to 7 by the student. Of those 21 questions, 11 are "what" questions, 4 are the more open "how"

questions and 6 are yes/no. One interesting pattern in the questioning was that 3 of the 4 "how" questions are embedded in a turn and are not allotted wait time for a response. They seem to be leads to more closed questions--in all three cases beginning with "what." For instance Carol asks,

"How do you when you're presenting research you know... what's one what are some ways that you let your reader know that you're going to be dealing with these particular..." She may be using the "how" question to stimulate the student to think before offering the more closed "what" question. She may also be giving the student time to formulate a response without feeling pressured by the silence of unfilled wait time.

Of the six yes/no questions, three appear to be merely requests for clarification, "The women do?" One actually seems to be rhetorical, "Oh did you you've already written a beginning paragraph?" And one appears at a point of stress or tension (discussed below). It appears to be a method of solidifying a position, "That 's true, but is it as simple as men can do whatever they want--no problem?" The final yes/no question is a display question, "Remember that from 101?"

In 14 of 21 questions, Carol waits for an answer. After all but one question, Jan waits for an answer. Of the seemingly "open" questions, I doubt whether any of them were truly open-ended. Both participants appeared to have an answer in mind.

There are a few examples of direct teaching, "mini-lessons." For example, Carol says, "Remember, you have to anticipate in your argument um what objection someone could make to it. Remember that from 101?" This move is typical of the type of discourse found in the classroom. However, it only occurs twice. Carol does use paraphrase and summary, but usually paraphrases of Jan's speech, not her own, and to underline a point she (Carol) feels is important.

Writing Center theory holds that conferences should not be directive because students may feel threatened by bluntness and may resist suggestions for remedying problems (Duke, 1975). Duke recommends instead a "counseling" approach (focusing, clarifying, accepting and approving , reassuring, nondirective leads). This is the approach Carol uses in this session. She uses phrases such as, "how could you approach...," "Let's think about this," "I'm just paraphrasing something you said," "Let's think about this."

I found the session itself to be so focused that neither participant moved far from topic or task. Often, the only indicators of topic shift seemed to be kinetic rather than linguistic, and therefore, beyond the scope of this paper. The linguistic realizations of those topic shifts were subtle at best.

How are "agendas" negotiated and modified in discourse in a writing center conference?

From an original interest in topic, I moved to one of agenda. The student's assignment was a synthesis paper on, "What constitutes women's 'work' and what constitutes men's 'work' in three societies of the student's choosing." The student brings voluminous notes from her three readings and several rough drafts of her paper to this session.

Jan described to me in her playback session that in her first trip to the Writing Center, the consultant had put her to work "listing" the important issues in each of the three articles, a typical brainstorming strategy often used by instructors to help students to get "started." She said she had made comprehensive lists and described that stage of the composing process as "easy."

For her second session, she brought the lists and a draft in which she described each culture and what kinds of work were important in each. She said the consultant (not Carol) had challenged her use of the word "important," and she said she had felt frustrated and confused when she left.

The third session is the one analyzed here. She said she found parts of it frustrating, but that it was very successful over all. When asked to define successful, she said she began to understand what she "believed" about the topic. She also discussed teacher evaluation and grade.

Carol, in her discussion of the session, said that Jan "had trouble being specific; she was hard to draw out." She felt that the student had done too much work; that students who have written a lot already are "resistant" because they have a lot at stake. Jan, according to Carol, had already written a lot and was "distraught" at "giving up what she's already written. She really goes kicking and screaming into throwing anything away." Obviously both participants saw the session as frustrating, at least at particular moments.

The transcripted segment centered around the revision of the thesis. The student was writing a paper on gender "work" in three societies. Carol felt the thesis was too broad and was trying to guide the student to narrow the focus of the paper and to "tighter," more accurate language. She also said in the playback session that she wanted to get Jan to synthesize the material she had read; that Jan just wanted to summarize the three articles and make a blanket thesis at the beginning and the end of paper. I believe these two items made up Carol's agenda.

Jan also came with an agenda. She was not able to (or did not) express her agenda, but it is clear from the dialogue presented below (Extract) that she came hoping for a way to "fix" the paper she had already written. She did not want to seriously revise or to start over.

What Jan wanted was to take the reams and reams of paper she already had and somehow make it acceptable. She knew from her own reading of it and from her previous sessions in the center that something was wrong, but she did not know what it was. She had done her homework (i.e., a thorough reading and notetaking of the articles, summarizing of the articles and making some attempts at drafting a paper). The difference between those two agendas is the cause for the tension in the excerpt.

Jan began this particular session by asking if she might just add the names of the cultures studied to her thesis statement. Carol responds with an indirect answer, "let's talk about points of comparison...to help you come up with a thesis." Jan responded in some confusion with another broad and categorical statement of men and women's roles. She (Jan) stammers, made some false starts and Carol "backtracked" to a more comfortable topic for Jan, that of actual content of an article ("And and but all of those jobs went to men is that what she was encountering?"). Carol, then, offered her own paraphrase of the thesis, "I would just be rephrasing a sentence that you said just a couple minutes ago, um even in cultures when women seem like they have a lot of control. They still have less control than men." Jan responded, "uhhuh." Carol reported to me later that this was a "pretty helpful" paraphrase. She directed Jan towards a new thesis albeit indirectly.

Then to keep Jan moving towards a more specific thesis, Carol continued, "what's one, what are some ways that you let your reader know that you're going to be dealing with these particular..." To which Jan answered in some confusion, "Well, you just have to come up and say that in different cultures that have been studied or whatever...I don't know."

Then a few minutes later, Jan asks, "So should I mention them?" (the three cultures). Jan still wanted to know what should be added to the thesis statement to be able to retain the draft she had.

Carol had her read her thesis, and thinking it was too broad and too simplistic (playback session), tried to give examples of situations that contradicted her thesis by "playing devil's advocate."

In this extract, at 1, Carol tries to challenge Jan's simplistic thesis statement with an example. She uses a "How" question. Jan's reaction (2) "I think it depends..." was, according to Carol, "the last answer she expected, the very last." (playback session).

Extract:

Carol- ok well just let me just play devil's advocate with you for just a minute here. Let's look at what you have up here uh (reads) "She is limited to what society allows her to do or what society feels is important." ... Ok, let's say you are a man in U.S. society and you came home and you told your parents uh when they asked you what you wanted to do when you got out of college and you said that you thought what you wanted to do was get married and raise kids. That's what you thought you wanted to do with your life. [1]How do you think that the parents would react to that?

Jan- [2]I think it depends on the parents. [uhhuh] I think it really does depend on the parents.

Carol- and so [3]what do you think could possibly happen though? What would be the range of possibilities?

Jan - [4]Well, first of all, I don't think it's realistic in this society because two people have to work [uhhunh] Unless he's going to marry a wealthy woman and this woman's going to accept this man setting at home... So there's gonna be a problem there but but there are many times where men do work er at home and watch the children. There's many cases.

Carol- That's true [5]but is it as simple as men can do whatever they want- no problem?

Jan- [6]No, no, but they more so than women.

Carol- ok but that but that's a qualification of what you've written here. Notice here that you made it sound very black and white [uhhuh]. You said women are restricted

Jan-but aren't you supposed to do that in an argument?

Carol- No, no, not at all. I mean I think that's a common misconception you know that an argument has to be completely black and completely white... You know there's a lot of prejudice against women doing certain things and there's a lot of prejudice against men who try to do certain things.

Jan- [7]How can you fix this then?

Carol- Ah Well, what do you think? You know now.. I mean you really did know before that it was more complicated than this but this seemed easier to argue.

Jan- [8]Yeah

Carol- How do you think you could write it up so that you respect both the complexities and you put it in a way that you can argue it? ...

Jan- [9]So what should I say? In the 3 societies or writings that I read I found that ... You know and then say all this...

Carol- You don't have to say "in these 3 articles" you don't have to be as you know as mechanical as that about this anyway. You can say something like um "In 3 cultures studied" you know, um and then you can present your your general idea. ...What X do you think [10]you could claim given what you've read?

Jan- Um. [11]Men had more freedom to pick what type of work they wanted to do and more often it was accepted as being all right

Carol-That's

Jan-whatever it was.

Carol- [12]There you go...

Something was not going according to plan, at least to Carol's plan. From watching the tape and listening to comments to this point, it seems that here at 1, Jan realizes that her paper as is will not work in light of the examples Carol gives. Her thesis is not broad enough to encompass these exceptions, but it is not narrow enough to exclude them either. So, she refuses to acknowledge the implication the example offers. In the next turn, Carol says (in confusion) "what would be the range of possibilities?" She moves from her original "how" to a more narrow "what" question, still trying to get Jan to recognize that her thesis will not work in its present "black and white" assertions. In turn 4, Jan tries to defend her answer. Carol agrees (5) but now

narrows her question again, "but is it as simple as men can do whatever they want--no problem?" Jan, then has no choice but to answer "no" (6). In (7), Jan's agenda is realized, "how can I fix this then?" She wants a fix, not a rewrite. And in (9) again, "So what should I say?" Her agenda is to make corrections in a superficial way that will enable her to keep the portions of her paper she has already written.

At point 9, Jan answers a question by Carol about whether Jan hadn't already known this topic was more complicated than the thesis indicated and Jan says "yeah." At that point, Jan seems to come to terms with compromising her agenda because in the next exchange (10 and 11) to Carol's "What can you claim..." Jan offers, "Men had *more* freedom to pick what type of work they wanted to do and *more often* it was accepted as being all right..." (emphasis mine). Carol's evaluative, "There you go" (12) indicated a compromise[6] which Carol found to be acceptable..

While clearly not of the Rogerian mind in consulting (Carol does have her own agenda), it seems apparent from the exchange above that Carol, as a consultant, does not want to dictate change to the student. She uses questions and anecdotes to guide the student away from a thesis that she believes will not serve the assignment to one that she believes will allow for a fairer discussion of the topic.

However, in the playback session with Jan, she mentions repeatedly that she "should have" just started over on the paper after this session, but did not. She seems aware of Carol's agenda, but did feel that she had the "right" to make final decisions regarding her paper. However, she did revise the thesis and made "extensive" revisions to the draft after this session (Jan's playback session).

Conclusion

This conference differed from classroom discourse in some ways: the amount of teacher talk, while still more than student talk, was less than is found in most classrooms. Both student and consultant brought agendas, but the student was ableto maintain at least a part of her agenda (she only revised her paper; she did not start over). The consultant used more questions than the student and asked more "rhetorical" ones. She also used more examples and directive language (e.g., let's talk, o.k., first let's).

One major difference from classroom talk is that when the two agendas came into conflict, the consultant used questions to focus the student's attention on problems she saw in the (student) agenda rather than directives or evaluative statements (she did not say, "you can't do that," or, "that will not work"). Instead, she talked with the

student, presenting hypothetical situations until agreement was reached. She allows the student to discover a more "useful" thesis statement.

Jan came away from this conference satisfied with the results. She referred to the paper and the Drexel Writing Center conferences as a process and was also pleased with the results. (She got an "A".) Still, when asked she had a very difficult time, even while looking at the tape, articulating what was helpful and what was not.

It is important that more research be done, especially in light of the fact that while the student receives a grade, the consultant receives little evaluation or feedback. This center uses student evaluation forms after some sessions and self evaluations. It evaluates itself by looking at numbers of students who come, the number who return for more than one visit and numbers who come over more than one term. None of these is likely to tell a consultant specifically which things in a session help and which do not.

It would be interesting to see research done in this context that looked at "face" and "face threatening acts" (Brown and Levinson, 1978). Are power and status still an issue, even when the gatekeeping aspect of the situation is removed? How is age a factor with adult-to-adult encounters? Are positive and negative politeness issues in college writing centers? What part do gender differences play in these encounters? What about ethnicity?

There is very little information on writing center conferences where the writing expert is not the instructor. Possibly this is because centers like this are still held to be "remedial" or lab settings, in spite of efforts to dispel those myths (Bartolovich, 1991). With more and more writing centers on college campuses offering this type of service (and some high schools, as well), there is a need for more research on what is really happening in these encounters.

This is only one session with one consultant and one student. It would be unsafe to generalize from it in any way. But some questions for writing center consultants to ponder might be: how can discourse be used to encourage the writer to maintain control of the paper while still lending expertise to the student; how can the consultant guide without without being "directive;" what are "fair" methods for changing student agendas or how can "dueling" agendas in conferences be maintained so that neither participant feels that she has been made to sacrifice important concerns for a paper?

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2 In this paper, I use the feminine pronoun exclusively as the unmarked form; the two participants and the researcher are women and it seems, therefore, appropriate to do so.

3 The idea of patient (i.e. student) as the authority in these sessions originates with Carl Rogers' theories on counseling (1942). The therapist (consultant) mediates with the client to find the issues that are important to her (student/patient).

4 I mean by agenda: the goals for the paper, conscious or not, that the participants bring with them.

5 Drexel is on a quarter system and a research paper with its many stages must be accomplished in ten weeks. The composition course is often a source of stress and frustration to freshmen.

6 It is interesting to note the use by Jan of "you" and "I". She says, "How can you fix this then?" and later, "So what should I say?" She seems to be showing that she "owns" the paper.

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Appendix
Excerpts from
The Drexel University Writing Center Manual for Tutors

The Drexel Writing Center

Operating under the aegis of the Department of Humanities and Communications, the Drexel Writing Center is located in room 0020, MacAlister It is open from 10 a.m.. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays, to all University students. The Center is a place for writers to come to talk about their work, and its services are free and confidential. It is staffed by experienced tutors who have been trained to help others with their writing. The majority of the staff currently teach in the Freshman Humanities Sequence. In addition, peer tutors, trained in a special course, assist the regular staff. Along with individualized writing instruction to all University students, the Center provides

- workshops on academic writing, and
-advice in all areas of writing to Drexel faculty and staff

Writing Center Philosophy

The Writing Center Director and tutors are committed to

- keeping the responsibility for the writing where it belongs: with the student,
- recognizing the ways constructive, immediate response can serve writers,
- having students write as a way to learn to write,
- helping student see where rigid or inappropriate rules about writing have derailed or blocked their work,
- allowing students time to find the best way of working, and
- empowering students with strategies that can assist their prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing.

Writing Center Policy

1. All writing conferences will be held in 0020 MacAlister hall during scheduled consulting hours.
2. No consultant is permitted to work with a student who is currently enrolled in one of his classes.
3. The Center does not offer assistance with the writing of Ph.D. dissertations, Master's theses, materials for competitions, or take-home exams.

4. All appointments are scheduled for 30 minutes. If a conference could run longer, check to see if anyone has an appointment or if anyone is waiting, before agreeing to continue.
5. If a student is more than 10 minutes late for a scheduled conference, treat the session as a no-show and make yourself available to drop-ins or new appointments.
6. Tutors must ask students who are visiting the Center for the first time to complete a general information sheet; tutors must complete a conference record sheet for each tutorial session; and unless a student objects, tutors should send a Writing Center Report to the professor in whose class the student is enrolled.
7. Students' files are confidential.
8. No smoking is permitted in the Center.
9. Tutors should not make disparaging references about professors or Drexel University departments.
10. Tutors should keep scheduled work hours regularly and punctually, and call if absence is unavoidable.